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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCUL](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAI MFA DEMARCHE ON UNESCO/AMCIT VISIT TO PREAH
VIHEAR TEMPLE IN APRIL, VIEWS ON WHC LISTING

REF: A. BANGKOK 1275
[1](#)B. PHNOM PENH 406

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: MFA's American Affairs Acting Director General Apirath Vienravi called in then Charge June 18 for to express grave concern over a team of UNESCO representatives, including an Amcit, which crossed through Thai territory without permission or visas in April, en route to the Preah Vihear Temple in Cambodia. Separately, the Thai Cabinet June 16 reaffirmed the Thai position heading into the upcoming UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) meeting that the current unilateral listing of Preah Vihear should be scrapped in favor a joint listing by Cambodia and Thailand, in recognition of the location on the border and the shared cultural heritage, ensuring the project promotes understanding rather than fosters conflict. End Summary.

Protesting Amcit on UNESCO visit

[1](#)2. (SBU) MFA's Apirath delivered a formal complaint that in April a UNESCO delegation traversed Thai territory without a visa--a "grave violation of Thai sovereignty." Apirath said that the delegation had told the Thai they would travel to the temple by helicopter, but instead went overland through potentially dangerous territory. Included in that group reportedly was U.S. citizen Richard Sussman. Apirath asked the USG to confirm if Sussman were indeed a U.S. citizen and noted the Thai concern that the delegation's action put Sussman and the others at risk for their safety. The RTG has expressed concern over the visit with UNESCO Headquarters in Paris as well as the local UNESCO office in Bangkok and with the embassies of other countries whose citizens were part of the delegation.

Looking ahead to WHC meeting and Preah Vihear listing

[1](#)3. (SBU) The listing of Preah Vihear as a UNESCO World Heritage Site did not come up during Thai PM Abhisit's recent June 12 visit/meeting with Hun Sen in Phnom Penh, according to Thai sources. Nevertheless, the issue remains unresolved (see ref B for Cambodian perspectives; ref A provided Thai views of the overall border situation as of late May). For its part, the Thai Cabinet on June 16 reaffirmed its opposition to the 2008 Cambodian-only listing of Preah Vihear in advance of the upcoming WHC meeting in

Spain and assigned Natural Resources and Environment Minister Suwit Khunkitti to represent Thailand at the WHC session.

¶4. (SBU) The MFA's lead Cambodia officer Mongkol Visitstump told us June 18 that RTG also maintains that the registration of Preah Vihear remains incomplete because Cambodia has not yet fulfilled the conditions required by the 2008 WHC decision in Quebec. In particular, there should be the establishment and convening of an International Coordinating Committee (ICC) with Thailand's participation, as well as the provision of relevant information and documents including detailed maps and the buffer zone of the inscribed property. Neither has happened, Mongkol noted.

¶5. (SBU) PM Abhisit told reporters after this week's Cabinet meeting that Thailand favored a joint listing of the site, peace in the surrounding area, and benefits to both sides, suggesting the current single country registration compounds a sense of conflict rather than promotes joint cultural conservation and tourism. Culture Minister Teera Slekpetch told reporters separately that the cabinet decision was in line with the May 20 Thai World Heritage Committee decision to oppose the listing. Teera indicated that Thailand would nominate several candidates for vacant slots on the WHC, including Pisit Charoenwongsa, director of the Organization of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education, and Sawitree Wuwansathit, former deputy permsec of the Education Ministry.
JOHN